

# **SB0737 Juvenile Law - Probation and Treatment Serv**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0737 – Juvenile Law – Probation and Treatment Services –  
Required Disposition (Parental Accountability Act) – FAVORABLE**

**Bill Sponsor: Senator Benson**

**Committee: Judicial Proceedings**

**Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition**

**Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0737 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to promote legislation that strengthens education, healthcare, public safety, environmental protection, and social justice—ensuring that every Marylander has access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

SB0737 directly advances that mission by strengthening Maryland’s juvenile justice system through a more structured, treatment-focused approach to probation for youth who have been adjudicated delinquent or identified as children in need of supervision (CINS).

This bill requires the juvenile court to order probation for a child who has committed certain delinquent acts more than once or who has been adjudicated a CINS more than once due to habitual truancy. It also requires that probation include a treatment service plan to ensure the child and their family receive appropriate supports, interventions, and services tailored to the child’s needs.

These provisions are both practical and urgently needed.

**Maryland’s juvenile justice system is most effective when it focuses on rehabilitation, early intervention, and family-centered support. Youth who repeatedly engage in delinquent behavior or chronic truancy often face underlying challenges such as unmet behavioral health needs, unstable housing, family stress, or learning**

**difficulties. SB0737 ensures that probation is not merely punitive but instead includes a structured plan that connects youth and families to meaningful services.**

By requiring treatment service plans, the bill promotes accountability while addressing the root causes of behavior. This approach reduces recidivism, strengthens family stability, and improves long-term outcomes for young people. It also ensures that courts, service providers, and families work collaboratively to support the child's success.

SB0737 reflects a trauma-informed and equity-centered approach to juvenile justice. Youth involved in the system, particularly youth of color and youth from low-income communities, often experience significant barriers to accessing supportive services. Ensuring that probation includes a coordinated treatment plan helps reduce disparities and ensures that all young people receive the care and guidance they need.

SB0737 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens public safety, supports families, and promotes equitable access to rehabilitative services across the state. By ensuring that probation is paired with meaningful treatment and support, this legislation reinforces Maryland's commitment to helping young people thrive rather than cycle deeper into the justice system.

We urge the Committee to support this thoughtful, necessary, and youth-centered legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0737.**

# **SB0737 Testi.pdf**

Uploaded by: Omar Diallo

Position: FAV

JOANNE C. BENSON  
Legislative District 24  
Prince George's County

MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Education, Business, and Administration

Pensions

Chair, Procurement

*Joint Committees*

Audit and Evaluation Committee

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and  
State Personnel Oversight



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 201  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3148  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3148  
Joanne.Benson@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson**

**SB0737: Juvenile Law – Probation and Treatment Services – Required Disposition (Parental Accountability Act)**

Good afternoon, Chair Senator William C. Smith, and Vice Chairman Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, and the esteemed member of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

SB0737 strengthens accountability and rehabilitation within Maryland's juvenile justice system by ensuring that repeated serious delinquent behavior is met with thoughtful intervention and meaningful family engagement. This bill reinforces the simple principle that early, coordinated intervention is essential to protecting both the child's future and the safety of our communities.

This bill requires the juvenile court to place a child on probation unless secure confinement is ordered by a judge. If the court has determined that the child has more than once committed a delinquent act that would constitute a crime equivalent to an adult, used a firearm in the commission of a crime or has been found more than once to be a child in need of supervision, that's where this bill is powerful instrument in providing a restorative approach for our children and families of Maryland.

Importantly, the bill requires that this probation includes the adoption of a treatment service plan. That plan must outline specific supervision levels, goals for the child and family, services to be provided, and clear timelines for progress. It also requires the participation of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian in rehabilitative services that are in the best interest of the child and the family.

This legislation recognizes that lasting behavioral change cannot occur without family involvement. If a parent, guardian, or custodian does not participate in a court-ordered treatment service plan, the court is required to order their participation. This ensures accountability at every level while reinforcing that rehabilitation is a shared responsibility. The bill as well strengthens oversight by requiring timely implementation of treatment service plans and written certification to the court. If implementation does not occur within the required timeframe, the court must schedule a disposition review hearing. This guarantees that court-ordered services are not merely recommended but actively delivered.

SB0737 does not seek to punish. It seeks to intervene earlier, intervene consistently, and intervene effectively. By combining probation, structured treatment plans, and parental accountability, the bill helps create a clear pathway toward rehabilitation while maintaining public safety for our children, parents and communities.

Thus, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0737 and thank you for your consideration.

# **SB 737\_ Juvenile Law - Probation and Treatment Se**

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: FAV

**SB 737:** Juvenile Law - Probation and Treatment Services - Required Disposition (Parental Accountability Act): Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to express my strong **support** for Senate Bill 737, the "Parental Accountability Act", sponsored by Senator Joanne Benson (Democrat).

Juvenile delinquency and truancy remain serious challenges in Maryland, often linked to insufficient structure, supervision, and parental engagement. This bill takes a proactive, rehabilitative approach by requiring the juvenile court to place non-detained children—who have committed certain delinquent acts more than once or been adjudicated in need of supervision—on probation. It mandates the development of a treatment service plan and ensures meaningful involvement from the child's parent or guardian in the child's life and compliance with the plan.

By making probation a required disposition in these repeat or high-risk cases, **SB 737** promotes accountability for both the juvenile and the family, while prioritizing rehabilitation over punitive measures alone. **Structured probation with treatment services can address root causes like truancy, behavioral issues, or lack of guidance, helping steer young people away from further delinquency and toward positive outcomes.** This family-focused framework aligns with evidence-based juvenile justice principles that emphasize supervision, services, and parental responsibility to break cycles of crime and improve community safety.

Enacting this bill would provide courts with a consistent tool to intervene effectively in cases where repeated offenses signal the need for more oversight and support, ultimately benefiting Maryland's youth, families, and neighborhoods.

I urge the Committee to **give SB 737 a favorable report** and advance it for passage.

**Strengthening parental accountability and probation requirements is a smart, compassionate step toward reducing juvenile crime and supporting successful futures for our children.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals



# **2026 SB0737 Testimony Against 2026-02-25.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

## Testimony Against SB0737

Honorable Senators

Please enter an unfavorable decision about SB0737, the so-called Parent Accountability Act.

I am opposed to

- **Requiring** the juvenile court to order **certain probation** for a child found to have committed certain delinquent acts **more than once** or adjudicated to be a child in need of supervision **more than once** because of **habitual truancy**;
- **Requiring probation** of a child adjudged delinquent for certain acts or a child in need of supervision to include the adoption of a treatment service plan and **providing the child and the child's family with certain services**.

I am perplexed by the title of this bill as the synopsis does not state what actions the parents would be required to do should these repeat offenders not change their ways.

Perhaps this bill should be entitled the Juvenile Repeat Offender Coddling Act, as I see no punishment of the juvenile and no consequences if the parents or those acting in the parental role fail to keep these youths from breaking the law again. It seems that if the child misbehaves, those adults who should be made accountable will just receive more services.

Please enter an unfavorable decision about SB0737.

Alan Lang  
45 Marys Mount Road  
Harwood, Maryland 20776  
Legislative District 30B  
410-336-9745  
[Alanlang1@verizon.net](mailto:Alanlang1@verizon.net)

February 23, 2026

# **SB 737 -Juvenile Law – Probation and Treatment Ser**

Uploaded by: Betsy Fox Tolentino

Position: UNF

Aruna Miller  
Lt. Governor

Wes Moore  
Governor

Betsy Fox Tolentino  
Secretary

**Date:** February 25, 2026  
**Bill Number/Title:** SB 737 -Juvenile Law – Probation and Treatment Services – Required Disposition (Parental Accountability Act)  
**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**DJS Position:** Oppose

---

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) respectfully opposes Senate Bill 737. SB 737, the Parental Accountability Act, would require the juvenile court to order probation for any child not placed in secure confinement if the child has:

- Committed certain delinquent acts more than once, including acts that would constitute a crime of violence or a crime of violence with a dangerous weapon if committed by an adult, or has used a firearm in the commission of a crime; or
- Been adjudicated a Child in Need of Supervision more than once because the child is habitually truant.

Under the bill, probation in these cases must include the adoption of a treatment service plan and require both the child and the child's parent, guardian, or custodian to participate in rehabilitative services. If a parent fails to participate or meet with the juvenile counselor, the court must order the parent to do so.

DJS supports family involvement and the use of individualized treatment plans where appropriate. However, we are concerned that SB 737's mandatory disposition requirement removes essential judicial discretion.

Under current law, judges have the authority to make individualized determinations about the most appropriate dispositions for youth after considering all relevant factors, including risk and need assessments, evaluations, the youth's service needs, and input from all parties involved. This individualized judicial review is fundamental to identifying the intervention that best promotes public safety and the child's rehabilitation.

By requiring probation and specific conditions in all cases that meet the statutory criteria, SB 737 risks imposing an outcome that may not align with a particular child's needs or the court's thorough evaluation. Mandatory dispositions may inhibit the court's ability to respond flexibly to complex, individualized circumstances and could inadvertently limit the effectiveness of interventions designed to produce positive, long-term outcomes.

For these reasons, DJS respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 737.

**MAJR-2026-SB737-UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Bill Carlson

Position: UNF

# Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



To: Chair Will Smith and Judicial Proceedings Committee members  
From: Bill Carlson and Jenny Zito, MAJR Executive Committee  
Subject: UNF - **SB0737 - Parental Accountability Act**

February 25, 2026

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) asks you to oppose SB 0737, which would require certain children to be put on probation and would require parents to participate in probation and rehabilitative services.

While it may seem logical that increased parental participation in probation and rehabilitative services would improve the outcomes of these services, SB 0737 is likely to have unintended consequences that will burden some of Maryland's most economically disadvantaged families, who are already facing systemic challenges. As the Office of Public Defender has pointed out in past testimony, there are other statutes that already have sufficient coverage in this area. SB 0737 will also increase the number of children interacting with the criminal justice system and could exacerbate racial and socioeconomic disparities already evident in our criminal justice system.

A better approach to the problem of repeated delinquency would be to provide wrap-around services to families in need, such as in-home counseling ; community-based mentoring; school-based intervention; and additional supports for the family.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation and urges the committee to give SB 0737 an unfavorable report.

**Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, Inc.**

351 Dubois Rd., Annapolis, MD 21401  
Organization

[www.ma4jr.org](http://www.ma4jr.org)

A 501c(4) Non-profit Advocacy

**sb737.pdf**

Uploaded by: Will Vormelker

Position: UNF

HON. STACY A. MAYER  
CIRCUIT COURT  
JUDGE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY  
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY  
CIRCUIT COURT  
JUDGE  
FREDERICK COUNTY  
VICE-CHAIR



KELLEY O'CONNOR  
ASSISTANT STATE COURT  
ADMINISTRATOR  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS  
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
P: (410) 260-1560

SUZANNE PELZ, ESQ.  
SNR. GOVT. RELATIONS AND  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER  
P: (410)260-1523

## MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Legislative Committee  
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.  
410-260-1523  
**RE:** Senate Bill 737  
Juvenile Law - Probation and Treatment Services - Required  
Disposition (Parental Accountability Act)  
**DATE:** February 18, 2026  
(2/25)  
**POSITION:** Oppose

---

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 737.

The Judiciary recognizes that it is legislative prerogative to craft legislation around probation in juvenile cases but notes that as drafted, this bill raised several concerns, including the following:

Most concerning, the bill would remove judicial discretion to determine whether to place a child on probation in certain circumstances. By requiring the juvenile court to place a child on probation under the circumstances set out in the bill, the bill essentially prevents the juvenile court from determining whether, at this time, the child who has committed a delinquent act requires guidance, treatment, or rehabilitation.

The bill also applies to a child “not ordered to be held in secure confinement”. “Secure confinement” is not a term defined in statute. It is unclear whether the term would refer to only what the Department of Juvenile Services refers to a “hardware secure facility” or

would it also include a “staff secure facility. It is also unclear if it would include a therapeutic residential treatment center or shelter care.

Finally, the proposed amendment to § 3-8A-20.1 appears to change the definition of “treatment service plan” to include a “plan ordered [new language] at a [certain] hearing “by the Department of Juvenile Services”. That department has no authority to order the plan; that is solely a judicial responsibility. It is unclear what the bill envisions.

cc. Hon. Joanne Benson  
Judicial Council  
Legislative Committee  
Kelley O’Connor